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Dear Permission to be Powerful Reader,

I have a lifelong habit, and it's sad.

**I can't believe I spent my whole life
being this way.**

Not only that, I never even really noticed.

I had been so used to being this way I didn't know how not to be this way.

It just faded into the background.

I overshare, overgive...

It's the most obvious truth that I was utterly oblivious to.

I am currently so upset with my father for turning me into this. When I was a boy, my father only spent time with me if I did what he wanted.

He never took a genuine interest in me but for a few fleeting moments. And, being a child, I was so desperate to get his attention that I made up my mind that if I had to get his attention by doing whatever he wanted, then so be it.

This is a terrible way to live your life. People pick up on this vibe very quickly.

It speaks volumes about what kind of person I was — a mark. There is a certain kind of person who lusts after a person like me. This type of person desperately craves control. They want more than they will ever give.

So, I was set up to be exploited in my personal and professional relationships. I married a woman who fully expected me to bend backward for her, yet she felt perfectly justified in never reciprocating that. She didn't even know where to start. She was so profoundly used to overtaking.

Give and give and give and give.

It comes out of my pathological need for others' approval. Precedents are so important. Once I set that precedent — where people knew they could exist in my life for free — they knew I had no expectations from them. That created a lifelong pattern of being in one-sided relationships. SO EXHAUSTING.

These days, I watch this particular pattern like a hawk. I've refused to add new contacts to my phone until I've seen ample proof that someone deserves to be in my life. It's a simple fail-safe.

Last night, I texted this girl I like. I told myself I wouldn't text her until she initiated the conversation to see proof that she was invested in me, but I couldn't resist. I only texted her once but decided to delete her number because I couldn't resist. That way, I could only keep this interaction going if she demonstrated that she wanted to talk to me.

I find this particular habit to be so sad yet revealing. It tells me that when I was little, I decided to do anything for some love and attention. The other party could have me at any price. Whatever you want, I'll give because I have no value whatsoever.

Make no mistake — this is an addiction or a compulsion, at the very least.

I like to be giving. And, technically, there isn't anything wrong with that. The only problem is... I discovered that I was projecting my expectations onto other people. Some people don't feel obligated to reciprocate when they know they can have your time and energy for free.

From my point of view, the whole idea is:

I'll be nice to you, and you'll be nice to me. But some people can't tell the difference between kindness and weakness. Sometimes, kindness is viewed as a weakness to be exploited.

Remember, this is a fact that the offender will never admit it outright. If they're nefarious enough to exploit your weaknesses, they already know their actions are wrong. You're preaching science to a creationist. They're not going to hear you.

I've been telling myself privately that I'm an expert in psychology. Technically, that's not true, but I believe it anyway. Because I spent so much time reading psychology books and working with people, I gave myself a world-class education from self-study.

First, my business has been my laboratory for almost 15 years. I've conducted thousands of Zoom calls, worked with different types of people, and become extremely good at influencing them.

It takes influence to convince someone to pay you \$10,000. See what I mean? That's no small feat. I have to empathize with that person deeply. And I have to be a certain kind of professional for them. I am the expert who can make millions from his words.

Writing for Tony's audience of 2 million people also gave me a gigantic dataset against which to test my copywriting skills. I've had hundreds, if not thousands, of discovery calls.

Understanding human psychology requires real skill but is a prerequisite for inspiring the masses.

I think back to all of the psych books I've read. Again, definitely hundreds. I gave myself a completely tailored education. Not a single lesson was wasted. That has taken me to Tony's doorstep.

I got to step into Tony's mind and his shoes because of all the lessons I've learned. What you can achieve by staying the course with one craft is incredible — continually improving over time. My voice is mighty. I live the principles of copy. It's in my bones. In my very DNA. I am the copy.

For whatever reason, my career led me to develop a unique skill set. Those skills helped me overcome this lifelong habit, which is incredible—it's like voodoo.

When I was a pathological giver, people took and took and took. They demanded and commanded me.

Today, I have a "friends first" policy.

I'm guarding my inner sanctum. I'm not treating myself like I'm worthless.

My therapist has been trying to impress upon me that I need to make people earn every single inch that I give them.

For a person like me, who has relied on being overly generous to people who don't deserve this... it's hard. It's like learning to write with your other hand — hard. This pattern is deeply ingrained from decades of practice.

Interestingly enough, again, it's like voodoo. The minute I stopped chasing people, the perfect people immediately started knocking on my door. It's great. I'm aligned with people who can see my value for the first time.

The other day, a new friend told me I had a beautiful personality. I thought about it and was delighted that he could see what I knew was there.

But then I tried to think of everyone in my family. Not one person has ever acknowledged this undeniable truth. Ain't that a bitch.

How can the people who allege they love me not see my most brilliant quality? Something's wrong with that.

Do you mean I lived a whole lifetime, and nobody in my family ever told me I had a beautiful personality? If it's evident to strangers, why not family? What's up with that?

Well...

I'm discovering that I'm complicit in this problem

I am starting to understand that I am—or was—attracted to people who cannot see me and do not value me.

If you valued me, I wasn't interested. But the people who withhold their approval? Well, everybody knows I like a challenge.

Certain people thrive on taking advantage of others and can spot over-givers from a mile away.

Meanwhile, those same over-givers are oblivious that they have a big fat target on their back.

It's always a bummer to identify new one-sided connections that I didn't realize were one-sided.

I have a family member who asked me to buy him some weed. It's not the most enormous ask, I agree.

Later that day, I'm starving. I see a roti in the fridge, and I'm busy. I don't want to cook food. I asked them for it, knowing I did them a sizable favor. And he said no.

That told me what I needed to know.

Instantly revoking errand-boy privileges.

This is a one-sided dynamic.

When I gave up without getting back, I was stuck in a very unhealthy pattern.

It's easy to reinforce the idea that I can't meet my needs because I'm unworthy, not because I over-invested in the wrong person.

Some people are unable to understand reciprocity. It's just not in their makeup. They see an opportunity to take advantage, and they do.

But this kind of realization has taken me years. YEARS.

You don't wake up one day and say, "Oh, I see what's wrong. Let me fix it."

You have to keep experiencing the same pain over and over before you finally get the message.

That's how it was for me.

Even now, I still catch myself in moments of self-abandonment. But the key difference is that I see myself. I have enough awareness to recognize when I fall into the old patterns.

It's like rewiring your brain. It's not going to happen overnight.

But when you start setting boundaries and putting yourself first, the results are immediate. The shift is undeniable.

The first time I put up a boundary and didn't back down, I remember feeling like I would explode. My anxiety was through the roof. My body was in panic mode.

But I held the line. And you know what? It was worth it.

The people who respect you will stay. The ones who don't will leave. It's really that simple.

Life rewards you for evicting toxic people from it.

It's funny how predictable people can be. When you stop playing their game, they show their true colors.

It's not hard to look at a person's behavior and conclude how they might treat you. Actions always speak louder than words.

Until next time,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink. The signature reads "Anton Volney". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent diagonal line crossing through the middle of the name. The "A" is large and the "V" is also large and stylized.

Dancer, Writer, Buddhist



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